

'A Heap of Us Slaves:' Family and Community Life Among Slave Women in Georgia

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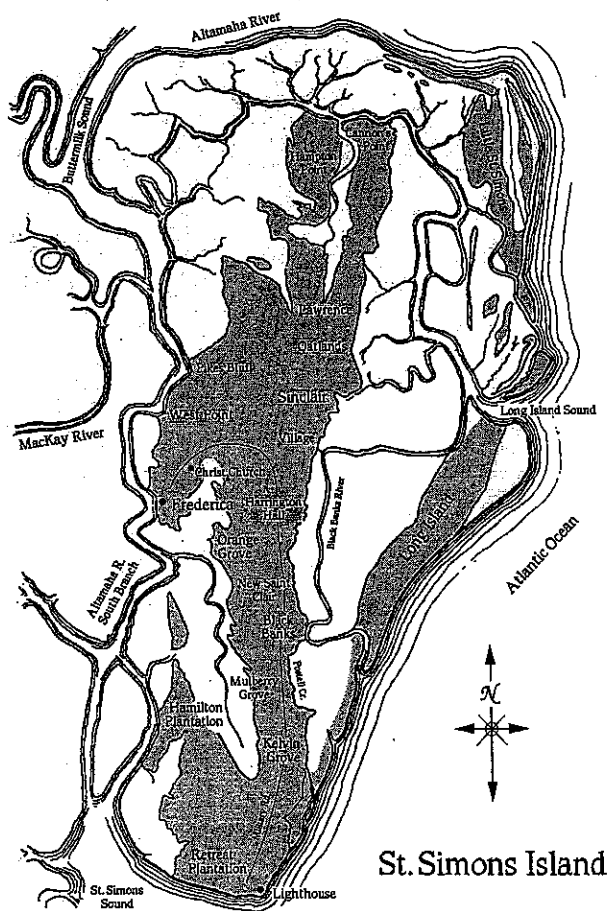
The first thing I recollect is my love for my mother," explained Adeline Willis, a former slave from Wilkes County, Georgia. "I loved her so," she continued, "and would cry when I couldn't be with her." The love and affection for her mother Adeline so vividly recalled, continued even after she married and had children of her own.¹ Although her husband Lewis resided on an "adjoining plantation," she proudly testified that he "came

to see me any time 'cause his Marster . . . give him a pass."² Adeline was fortunate to live on the same plantation with her mother and to marry a man whose master allowed him to visit her. However, not all female slaves had the same privileges. Psych, for example, who lived nearly 180 miles away on St. Simons Island in Glynn County, Georgia, found herself begging her mistress, Frances Kemble, to grant permission for a visit from her mother and her brothers. However, Kemble knew that in *this* region there "was a great objection to the visits of slaves from neighboring plantations."³

By the antebellum period, Wilkes and Glynn evolved into regions with mature plantation economies, dependent upon the labor of several thousand slaves. Slaveowners in both areas developed different methods of controlling their property based on the number of slaves in the county. For those residing in the piedmont region of Wilkes County where plantation size rarely reached more than twenty slaves, the decision to allow slaves to socialize with those on neighboring plantations did not present a challenge. However, planters living in Glynn County, where the slaves represented

80% of the total population, opted not to let their slaves associate with others for fear of insurrection.

Bondwomen such as Adeline grew up in a slave community that was located in the heart of the Georgia Cotton Belt. Wilkes County rests 114 miles east of Atlanta in the lower piedmont area of the state. It was one of the seven original counties established in 1777 and is often referred to as the "mother county of Georgia" because six additional counties developed from its initial boundaries.⁴ Wilkes County slaves resided on small holdings which were common for the Georgia piedmont.⁵ Historian Ralph Flanders calculated the average size slaveholding for Wilkes County and found that masters owned eight slaves per plantation in 1820 and sixteen slaves in 1857.⁶ The slave population for Wilkes County increased throughout the antebellum period from 57% of the total population in 1820 to 70% by 1860—always maintaining a slave majority.⁷ These percentages for Wilkes County are consistent with the trend for the piedmont region where scholars found that slaves constituted approximately 60% of the total population.⁸ Additional demographics



St. Simons Island. Retreat plantation is located at the southern tip of the island.

for Wilkes County indicate that the male/female ratio remained balanced between 1820 and 1860.⁹

By contrast, Psych lived in Glynn County which rests approximately fifty-eight miles south of Savannah along the coast of Georgia. In addition to the mainland, the county encompasses St. Simons and Jekyll Islands,¹⁰ which are part of a larger community of Sea Islands that stretch 120 miles along the coasts of North and South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.¹¹ Like Wilkes County, Glynn represents one of the seven original Georgia counties established in 1777. Unlike Wilkes County, however, Glynn County was the home of a large planter elite with a Black majority during the antebellum period, which represented approximately 80% of the total county population.¹² Slaves in Glynn County lived on larger plantations than those in

the interior Cotton Belt and were more isolated from whites due to population demographics and the high incidence of absenteeism among coastal planters.¹³ The average size slaveholding in 1850 was 41 slaves per plantation, a figure much larger than the statistic for Wilkes County.¹⁴ However, the total number of slaves in Glynn County during the antebellum period was approximately half that of Wilkes County.¹⁵ The two counties had similar male/female ratios, and both remained relatively balanced throughout the nineteenth-century.

Population demographics serve as indicators of family formation among slaves because they allow scholars to make assumptions about the methods slaves' employed to establish stable families. Historians have been engaged in a debate about the stability of the slave family for decades. Some maintain it was a cohesive unit while others argue that it was dysfunctional.¹⁶ Until recently, most scholars made broad generalizations about slave family life which led to what Charles Joyner described as "the slave community."¹⁷ Joyner, who was perhaps influenced by John Blassingame's earlier work, encouraged scholars to conduct additional community studies of slavery in "particular" regions. His work on South Carolina slave communities paved the way for other scholars to explore the complex and unique ways that slave families evolved.¹⁸

The term family is used to describe persons related through conjugal, consanguine, fictive, abroad, extended, or polygamous connections. For the purpose of this study, "family stability," contains multiple meanings. Stability, on the one hand, represents physical, emotional, and material aspects depending on various circumstances. Slaves living on the same estate with one or more relatives present, for example, experienced physical stability, but this did not guarantee emotional or material means of support. Slaves living among families with rich emotional stability usually resided on smaller plantations, experienced a less-intensive labor regime, and benefited from cross-plantation

socials. During periods of decreased labor, they spent time nurturing relatives at mealtimes, religious festivities, or other local social events. Thus, even if a slave lived on an estate with other relatives, labor patterns and the attitude of her master dictated the amount of emotional stability she experienced. Material stability, on the other hand, represented slaves' access to material possessions such as land, livestock, clothing, and food. Slave families with material items often used these goods to help their loved ones survive bondage.

Adeline and Psych went to extreme measures to establish and maintain familial ties. Although they lived in different regions of the state, they both functioned in an oppressive and restrictive environment. Within this environment, they discovered ways to adapt, invent, create, and maintain family units. Adeline had somewhat different options than Psych because she resided on a plantation in Wilkes County, where her master allowed slaves to interact with other communities beyond the confines of his plantation. Psych on the other hand, lived in a more restrictive environment in Glynn County, where her master forbade his workers from associating with slaves on "neighboring plantations." Although they both worked on antebellum cotton plantations in Georgia, their experiences were influenced, shaped, and distinguished by at least four important criteria; region, demographic characteristics, labor patterns, and the attitude of their masters.

Wilkes County contained fertile soil, perfect for the cultivation of short-staple

cotton. "If ever a crop and a place seemed well suited to each other," one historian wrote, "they were short-staple cotton and the lower piedmont."¹⁹ Short-staple cotton had a growing season of approximately two hundred days that determined the rhythm of work on farms and plantations alike.²⁰ The fields were prepared for planting between January and March, and after the last plowing in July slaves "rested" during the "lay-by season."²¹ Slaves commenced work again during harvest season by picking cotton from August through December.

Although many Glynn County slaves cultivated cotton as well, they labored over a different variety than their Wilkes County counterparts. Plantation owners grew Sea Island cotton, a finer quality of cotton than the strand cultivated in Wilkes County, and one that involved a more intensive labor regime. Planters from the Bahamas introduced this unique strain to St. Simons Island in the 1780s because they found the environment more suitable for the long-staple variety.²² Sea Island cotton yielded a longer, stronger, silkier and higher priced variety than short-staple cotton.²³ According to agricultural historians and former planters, Sea Island cotton could be sold for about fifty cents per pound, while short-staple cotton brought in slightly under twenty cents per pound.²⁴ Sea Island cotton was also longer, measuring 1.5 to 1.75 inches in length, as opposed to short-staple cotton, which measured .625 to 1 inch long.²⁵ Although the field preparation and planting stages of the two crops were comparable, Sea Island cotton required greater attention during the cultivation and market preparation processes. "The sea-island cotton industry developed a restricted geographic location and peculiarities of production and marketing so distinctive as compared with upland cotton," one historian has noted, "that the two may be fairly considered different industries."²⁶

Sea Island cotton cultivation also required a yearly work-cycle.²⁷ For that reason, Glynn County slaves did not have

This photograph of a former slave cabin located on St. Simons island was taken around 1900.

Courtesy of the Coastal Georgia Historical Society



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a "lay-by season," as did their cohorts in Wilkes County. Their labor—often under the task system—required an average of four or sometimes as many as eight intensive hoeings throughout the course of a year, opposed to the three to four "light hoeings" conducted in the Georgia piedmont.²⁸ Harvesting represented the most arduous task as slaves completed ten to twelve pickings with daily averages of approximately one hundred pounds.²⁹ Short-staple cotton pickers, on the other hand, averaged fifty to sixty pounds per day.³⁰ The final process of preparing cotton for the market included drying, ginning, "moting," and packing.³¹ Sea Island cotton market preparation was tedious because slaves worked with a more delicate fiber than the short-staple variety.³²

Field labor bound slaves to work during the majority of the day, consequently, the time available to maintain a family was greatly limited. It is important to understand that labor patterns and demographic characteristics of a particular region affected slave family formation. As indicated above, July marked a "lay-by season" for short-staple cotton pickers, and provided slaves more time for family socialization.³³ On the other hand, demographic characteristics such as the total population, the male/female ratio, and the slaveholding size, often restricted slave family formation in this region. Additionally, slaves often felt vulnerable to the threat and reality of separation. Despite these constraints, Wilkes County slaves courted and married one another, attended multiple plantation socials, and created families within the time and space available to them.

The selection of partners often transcended plantation boundaries because the average size slaveholding for Wilkes County was under twenty slaves. As such, slaves like Adeline enjoyed being courted by bondsmen from neighboring plantations. Ex-slave Mariah Callaway testified that "often in the evenings, boys from the other plantations would come over to see the girls . . . they would stand in large groups around the trees, laughing and

talking."³⁴ From the male perspective, it appears that slaves took extreme measures and sometimes life-threatening risks to spend time with slave females. The testimony of Marshall Butler exemplifies the risk, punishment, and desire he had to see a female slave named Mary:

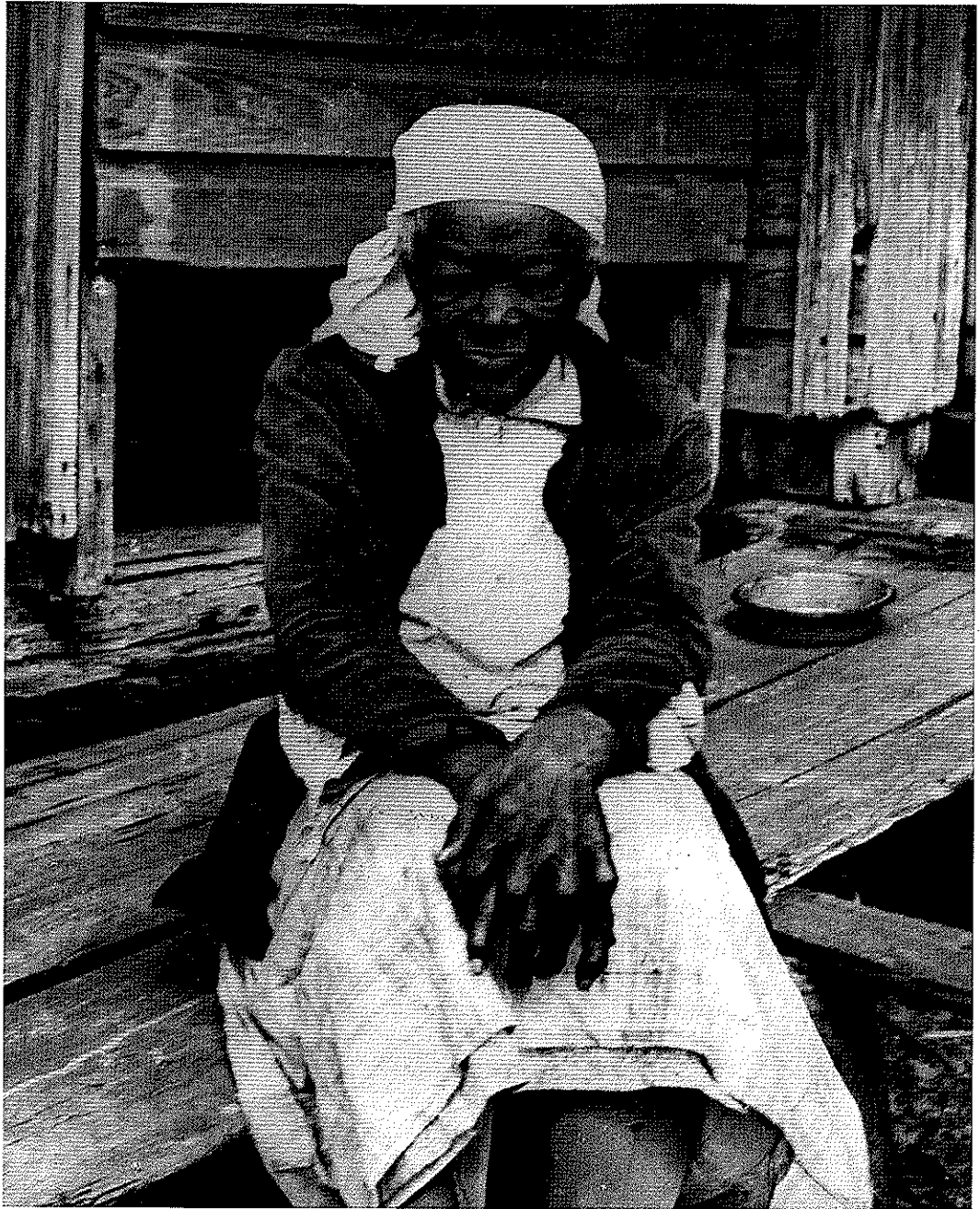
I' se left home one Thursday to see a gal on the Palmer plantation—five miles away. Some gal! No, I didn't get a pass—de boss was so busy! Everything was fine until my return trip. I wuz two miles out an' three miles to go. There come de "Paddle-Rollers" I wuz not scared—only I couldn't move. They give me thirty licks—I ran the rest of the way home. There was belt buckles all over me. I ate my victuals off de porch railing. some gal! Um—m—h. was worth that paddlin' to see that gal—would do it over again to see [M]ary de next night . . . Um—m—mh—Some gal!³⁵

Clearly, Marshal believed that Mary was "worth" the "thirty licks" or else he would not have gone to such extreme measures to see her.

In addition to clandestine visits, Wilkes County slaves socialized at inner-plantation dances, corn-shuckings, regional cotton-picking competitions, and harvest festivals because their masters gave them permission.³⁶ Reflecting on one of these events, former slave Jane Smith Hill Harmon boasted about her dancing skills:

I allus could dance, I cuts fancy steps now sometimes when I feels good. At one o' dem big ole country breakdowns (dances), one night when I wuz young, I danced down seben [7] mens, dey thought dey wuz sumpin'! Huh, I danced eb'ry one down!³⁷

Jane's remarks indicate that dances were fairly common in Wilkes County. However, even if masters allowed their slaves to attend dances, some slave parents did not permit their children to



This photograph of former slave and Glynn County midwife "Old Sibby" was taken around 1934.

Courtesy of
Georgia Department of
Archives and History

participate in such events. For example, Emma Hurly testified that she "ain't never danced a step nor sung a reel in my life. My Ma allus said we shouldn't do them things an' we didn't, she said if we went to the devil it wouldn't be 'cause she give us her 'mission!'"³⁸ Slave mothers and fathers had their own set of rules and regulations for the socialization of their children despite masters' desire to control the physical and social activities of their "property."

Matrimony did not guarantee that

Wilkes County slaves could live with their spouses, thus a preponderance of "abroad marriages" occurred. Slave husbands with passes could visit their wives once or twice per week on Wednesdays and/or Saturdays.³⁹ Adeline claimed that she and her husband Lewis continued their relationship after marriage in the same manner as their courtship. "I lived on with my white folks," she asserted, "and he lived on with his and kept comin' to see me jest like he had done when he was a courtin'."⁴⁰ Other slaves such as

Clarissa, a servant at the Hofwyl Plantation in Glynn County, Georgia was taken about 1910.

Courtesy of
Georgia Department of
Archives and History



Marshall Butler testified about his parents' relationship:

Mammy was a Frank Coller niggah and her man was of the tribe of Ben Butler, some miles down de road. Et was one of dem trial marriages—they'se tried so hard to see each other but old Ben Butler says two passes a week war enuff to see my mammy on de Collar plantation.⁴¹

Slave couples like these established lasting unions with one another despite distance and limited visitations. Although they maintained relations across several miles, it is clear that familial nurturing and discipline still occurred. As a child, for example, one slave testified that "the fust thing I 'members is follerin' my Mother er 'round . . . everywhere she went I wuz at her heels."⁴² The connection between mother and child became legally sanctioned by the Georgia Slave Code of 1755, which read in part that "slaves shall follow the condition of the mother and shall be deemed in law to be chattels personal in the hands of their owners and possessors."⁴³ Despite such legal stipulations, slave fathers found ways to raise their children as well. Jane Mickens' father, for example, lived on another plantation but she testified that "My Pa didn't 'low his chillun ter go 'roun'. No'm, he kep' us home keerful lak."⁴⁴ Clearly, her father was able to keep his fifteen children from visiting other slaves, despite the fact that he did not live at the same "home." Thus, distance and time did not stop slaves from parenting.⁴⁵

Regardless of the methods slaves employed to maintain a family, they were constantly subjected to the fear and reality of separation. Slaves felt vulnerable to family separation at all times, but especially when there was a death in the planter's family or when their masters were in debt.⁴⁶ They realistically testified about separation as one slave noted that "in dem days us niggers wuz bo't an' sole lak de does mules ter-day."⁴⁷ Some recalled hearing about such tragedies: "Us used to hear tell of big sales of slaves, when sometimes mammies would be sold away off from deir chilluns. It wuz awful, and dey would jes' cry and pray and beg to be 'lowed to stay together."⁴⁸ Other slaves such as Emma Hurly had painful memories as she recollected the day her grandmother was taken away from her family:

I recollects good when Mr. Seabron Callaway come over to the place an' bought my Grandma an' some other slaves an' took 'em away. We jest cried an' cried an' Grandma did too. Them white folks bought an' sold slaves that way all the time.⁴⁹

The presence of grandparents residing on the same plantation was not a common occurrence in this region because of the small slaveholding size. However, separation remained a primary concern for slaves in all regions. Evidence on slave family separation is also found in antebellum Wilkes County newspapers as well as planters' wills.

It appears that in some cases, masters placed entire families up for sale at the same time. Others provided special instructions in their wills regarding the division of their slaves. Newspaper advertisements reflect some of these patterns. On 27 March 1828, *The Washington News* advertised the sale of twenty-eight slaves, from three different families. The ad in part read:

Twenty-eight negroes . . . Frank and Sarah, and *their* children, Cinthia, Charlotte, Memory, Mariah, Milsey,

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and Primus, also Isaac and his wife Polly, and *their* children Garrison, Simeon and January, Bob and Delpha and *their* children, Martha and her young child not named, West, Patsey and her young child not named, Chloe and her children, Caroline, Betsey, Pompey, Sam, Peggy and Clary together with all the stock . . .⁵⁰

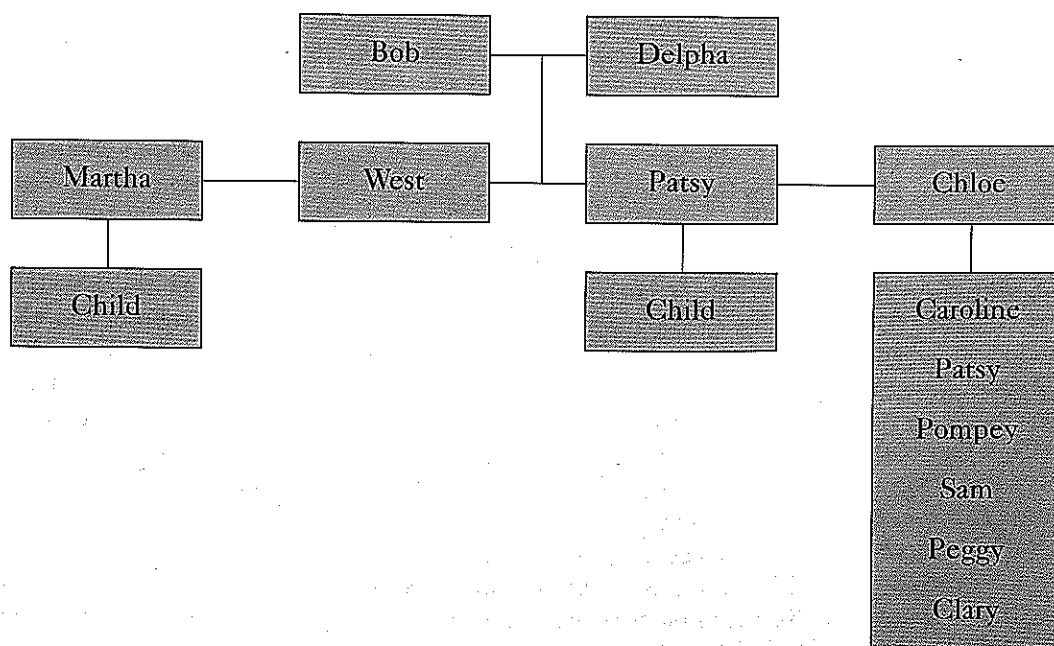
By looking closely at the three families in this advertisement, the notation of husbands and wives and evidence of grandparents is quite obvious. Such ads, however, do not clarify whether or not the master or the editor of the paper requested that slaves be listed in family units. Take for example, the family of Bob and Delpha (Figure 1). According to the ad, the couple had four children: Martha, West, Patsey, and Chloe. However, three of their children (Martha, Patsey, and Chloe) had children of their own. The second generation, which consisted of eight children, were the grandchildren

of Bob and Delpha. Despite the distinct recognition of slave families found in this advertisement, there was no guarantee that these slaves would be purchased together. This explains the preponderance of ads containing slave boys and girls listed alone. Other local newspapers such as *The News* and *The News and Planter's Gazette*, contain pages replete with advertisements of slave children.⁵¹

Such ads might read as follows; "ONE NEGRO GIRL named Fan, eight or nine years old . . ." or "One negro girl named Rachel nine or ten years of age . . ." or "A negro Girl named Matilda, levied on as the property of Thomas Bolter . . ."⁵² The aforementioned Fan, Rachel, and Matilda could have originated from families like Bob and Delpha's family, however, they were obviously not purchased with their parents or they would not appear alone. One other trend worth noting was the abundance of single mothers and children advertised together.⁵³

Despite such divisions, some masters had special instructions for their slaves in

Figure 1
FAMILY OF BOB & DELPHA, WILKES COUNTY, GEORGIA
The Washington News, 27 March 1828



their wills. Often, when a planter died the estate was divided between his remaining relatives. However, if a master had several residences—as was the case for many large planters—slaves could be reassigned to a different location.⁵⁴ Alexander Pope Sr., one of the wealthiest slaveowners in Wilkes County, ordered in his will that, “Gus and his wife to remain on the river place but to be accounted for as part of my estate.”⁵⁵ Pope had several plantations, and he wanted Gus and his wife to remain on a specific property. Although Pope made careful instructions for the couple, his brother John H. Pope provided a female slave named Sarah with a unique choice. His will stated that “Sarah be allowed to choose either my son John [Jr.] or William Henry for her master and the one she does not choose is to take old man Juba and take care of them respectively.” A few items later, he clearly changed his mind, but enabled her to make another choice: “it is my will that my brother William H. Pope take my old woman Sarah if she does not wish to go to Florida.” Perhaps, John Pope knew that his son John Jr. had plans to move to Florida, therefore, it was his desire to let Sarah stay with his brother William in Wilkes County if that was her “choice.”⁵⁶

Not all slaves in antebellum Georgia had choices, however, and the experiences of those residing in Glynn County suggest that family unions there were much different. Slaves in this region had restrictions unknown to those residing in Wilkes

County. Thus in order to understand the experiences of tidewater slaves, one must consider these regional variations.

Taking into consideration that Glynn County slaves worked with a more delicate crop, resided on larger plantations, and lived in an island community, it is perhaps not surprising that their familial experiences were significantly different than those in Wilkes County. Many Glynn County slaves were forbidden to socialize with slaves on other estates and their confinement to large plantations encouraged the development of relationships with mates on the same plantation. Hence, the burden and risk of obtaining a pass rarely existed in this tidewater community.

Instead, masters such as Major Pierce Butler, controlled their slave populations through “enforced isolation.” As a former military general, Butler used his knowledge and training to establish strict rules and regulations for the management of his slaves on Hampton Point plantation.⁵⁷

“No visit to neighboring plantations was ever permitted,” a descendant of a Glynn County planter noted, “and no intercourse of any kind [was] allowed with the outside world.”⁵⁸ Slaves residing on other St. Simons Island cotton plantations such as Cannon’s Point, Hamilton, and Kelvin Grove experienced similar isolation.⁵⁹

The demands of cultivating and harvesting Sea Island cotton also affected the familial experiences of Glynn County slaves. When Frances Kemble visited her husband’s plantation on St. Simons Island in the 1830’s she found that most of the requests made by slave women involved respite from labor.⁶⁰ Tedious and demanding labor left little time for slave family socialization, despite historians’ assertions that the task system allowed slaves more “free-time.” Forced reproduction, rape, and infant mortality characterized the lives of slave women in Glynn County. The story of Molly, a slave at Hampton Point, testifies to forced reproduction and the lack of control slaves had over their relationships. Appealing to her mistress, Molly inquired about the recent sale of her “real husband,” but her mistress was under the impression that a slave named Tony was

An old cotton gin house and cotton bale press located on the Toombs plantation in Wilkes County, Georgia (c. 1902). Wilkes County contained fertile soil, perfect for the cultivation of short-staple cotton.

Courtesy of
Georgia Department of
Archives and History





*Anna Matilda Page King,
owner of the Retreat
plantation on St. Simons
Island, Georgia.*

Courtesy of Coastal
Georgia Historical Society

Molly's husband. Molly assured her that Tony was the man the overseer "provided" for her. Molly and Tony conceived nine children together.⁶¹

Several historians explain that forced reproduction was a common occurrence during slavery.⁶² Yet, slaves also understood the value of childbearing mothers as one recollected that her aunt "was er breeder 'oman en brought in chillun ev' twelve month' jes' lak a cow bringin' in a calf."⁶³ Some Glynn County planters offered slave women incentives to have more children in order to increase their labor force. William W. Hazzard of West Point plantation gave a cow to families with six children. "When the family increases to ten living children," he explained, "I require no other labour from the mother than to attend to her children."⁶⁴ This exploitative practice essentially manifested itself as a bribe to encourage slave women to give birth. Women on Hazzard's estate were encouraged to breed in order to receive material possessions or to be excused from labor as a whole. Hence, the responsibilities of motherhood were only recognized after the birth of ten children. Fatherhood on the other hand, was not recognized at all, placing additional constraints on cohesive slave families.⁶⁵

Other women in Glynn County were subjected to the horrors of rape that informed the lives of all slave women and often preceded a severe whipping. The story of Sophy—a slave at Hampton Point—exemplifies the complexities of such exploitation. Confronted by the driver Morris, Sophy recollected that she followed "him into de bush" where the two of them conceived a boy named Isaac. She explained that she went for two reasons: one, because "he have strength to make me;" and two, because her "poor flesh [needed] some rest from the whip."⁶⁶ As a result of such sexual exploitation, slave women gave birth to several children on St. Simons Island. This pattern explains Kemble's notation in her journal that "all these women had large families, and all of them had lost half their children."⁶⁷

Despite masters' attempts to increase their slave population through forced reproduction, the survival rate among slave infants in this region was exceptionally low. Although the high incidence of infant mortality provides one explanation for the loss of several slaves born in Glynn County, scholars continue to grapple with the specific cause of death among slave infants as a whole. By identifying several factors that affected slave mothers such as climate, labor, diet, health, season, plantation size, lactation patterns, age, and African heritage, scholars note the complexities of infant mortality.⁶⁸ In some cases, they have argued that slaves residing in tidewater regions lived in a "less hospitable" environment, which increased their chances of contracting diseases such as malaria, small pox, and yellow fever.⁶⁹ Some studies concluded that masters contributed to the loss of slave infants because of the poor health and diet of slave parents, long hours of forced labor, and early weaning of slave infants.⁷⁰ Others argue that slaves were "victims of a conspiracy of nutrition . . . rather than planter mistreatment."⁷¹ Despite the variety of opinions, most studies indicate that labor represented the central component of slave mortality.⁷² Regardless of the primary cause, it is clear that infant and adolescent death were common familial experiences for Glynn County slaves. The loss of children in Glynn County confirms that the tidewater region was an unhealthy environment placing additional constraints on family stability. Additionally, slave women received little rest before, during, and after childbirth. Thus, poor living conditions and health care also prevented them from creating families. Wilkes County slave women also lost their children but there is little evidence in extant records which suggests that the climate was a contributing factor.⁷³

A review of the birth records from Glynn County plantations helps clarify the impact of infant mortality on slave family formation. In 1853, for example, the slave population at Kelvin Grove plantation consisted of 81 slaves of which

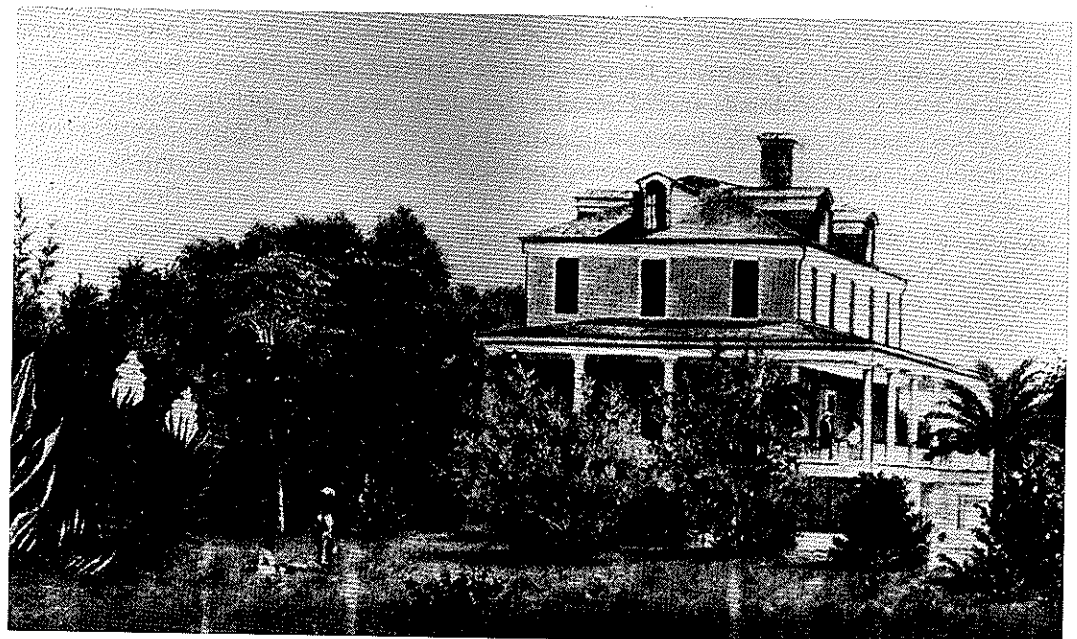
56% were women.⁷⁴ James P. Postell, the owner of the estate, made special recognition of Alley, Jinny, Nancy, Hanna, and Molly for their reproductive labor by noting the birth dates of their infants (see Table 1).⁷⁵ Of the seven children born, four survived indicating that 43% of the slaves born in 1853 died during infancy.⁷⁶ On the days in which births occurred, Postell noted in his journal, "1 slave nursing." However, for three of the seven births, he allotted only three to four consecutive days of "nursing" following the birth—after which it appears that the women went back to field labor.⁷⁷

This significance of a three to four day "nursing" period is important considering the connection between breastfeeding (namely lactation patterns) and infant mortality. According to Herbert Klein and Stanley Engerman, enslaved females in the United States breastfed their infants for approximately one year. Whether knowingly or not, this time often served as an informal period of contraception, because studies show that the chances of getting pregnant decreases during lactation.⁷⁹ On the other hand, in African and West Indian societies women typically breastfed their offspring for two years, thus increasing the space between child-birth and decreasing the frequency of pregnancy. Such trends are noteworthy because lactation patterns are directly related to slaves' diet, health, and ultimately survival.⁸⁰ If planters restricted the time and duration of breastfeeding, the likelihood of infant survival beyond the first year was highly unlikely. Slave infants needed their mothers' care, and breast milk represented a primary source of their nutrition.⁸¹ However, early supplementation replaced breastfeeding and added to the challenge of survival, particularly on large units.⁸² Labor demands forced slave women back into the fields shortly after giving birth and, according to Kemble, "this enforced separation from their children" robbed bondswomen of

Table I
SLAVE BIRTHS & DEATHS AT
KELVIN GROVE PLANTATION, 1853⁷⁸
GLYNN COUNTY, GEORGIA

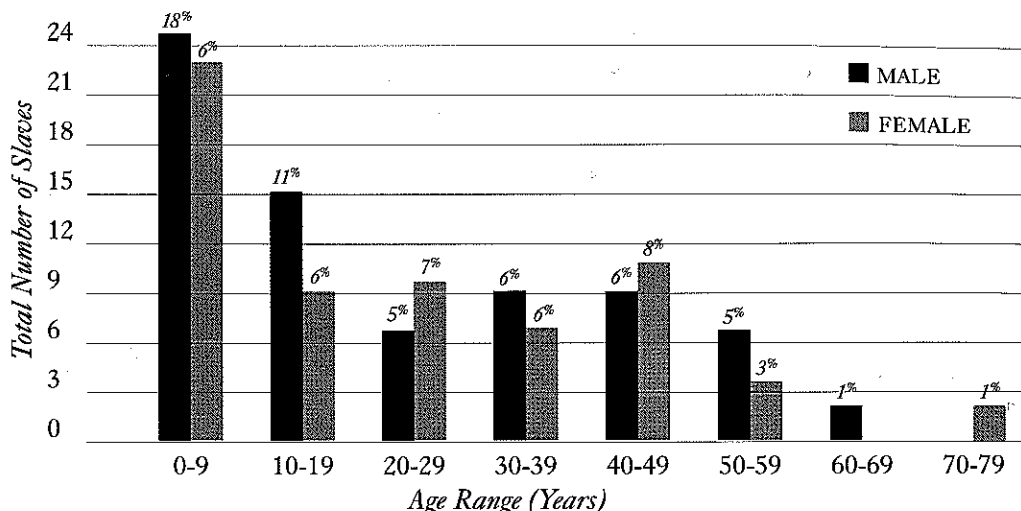
<i>Name of Mother</i>	<i>Birth Date of Child</i>	<i>Death Date of Child</i>
Ally	1/22/1853	
Jinny	2/10/1853	
Nancy	5/19/1853	
Hanna	9/8/1853	
Hamit	8/15/1853 (twins)	9/20/1853 (twins)
Molly	10/14/1853	10/27/1853

*Cannon's Point
plantation on St. Simons
Island, Georgia.*
Atlanta History Center



**RETREAT
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Figure 2⁹¹
AGE DISTRIBUTION OF RETREAT SLAVES 1827



their maternal duties and affirmed their role as “human hoeing machines.”⁸³

The short duration of rest after pregnancy was not limited to Kelvin Grove plantation. Nearly twenty years earlier on nearby plantations owned by the Butler family, a field hand named Molly complained about short confinement among slave women. “Missis, we hab um pickanniny—tree weeks in de ospital,” she claimed, “and den right out upon the hoe again—can we strong dat way, missis? No!”⁸⁴ Molly made this passionate claim to her mistress on March 5, 1838 as she requested a lighter workload. Like several other female slaves owned by the Butler family, Molly welcomed the presence of her mistress Frances Kemble who visited her husband’s estate in the late 1830’s. Slave women on this plantation recognized that motherhood, despite racial differences, bound female experiences. Thus they pleaded for Kemble to intervene and ask their master for lighter workloads before, during, and after childbirth. Female slaves rejected their status as “human hoeing machines” and tried to assert their roles as sister, daughter, mother, and wife to their owners.⁸⁵

Although evidence of forced reproduction, rape, and infant mortality suggest the instability of Glynn County slave families, a close look at specific plantation records indicates the contrary. As such,

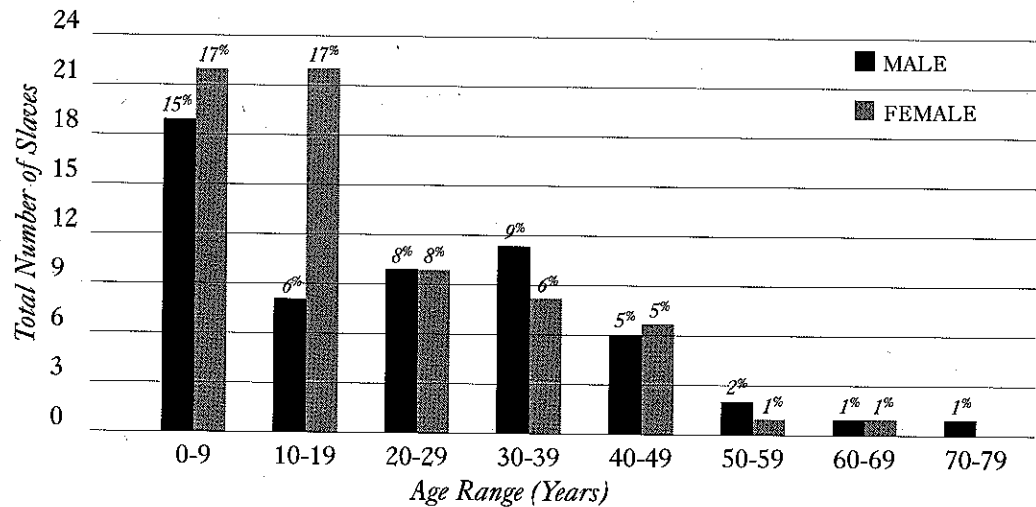
community demographics for a particular region only tell half of the story. A variety of slave family structures developed within an individual community and among individual plantations.⁸⁶

Looking at the records for Retreat Plantation, it appears that slave families remained stable throughout the entire antebellum period.⁸⁷ The slave population exceeded one hundred slaves during the antebellum period, consisting of 140 in 1827, 112 in 1850, 129 in 1859, and 142 in 1860.⁸⁸ Referring specifically to the 1827, 1859, and 1860 lists, it appears that the slave population did not change much during this thirty-three year period. In 1827, for example, female slaves represented 47% of the population while male slaves contained 53% of the slave force.⁸⁹ Thirty-two years later in 1859, the slave population decreased by eight percent from 140 to 129. Of this later population, women totaled 55% of the population while men represented 45% of the slave force. Thirty slaves appeared on both the 1827 and 1859 lists and by the latter date contributed to seventeen nuclear families, which indicates some stability on this plantation.⁹⁰ These statistics suggest a relatively balanced slave population. However, age distributions allow additional conclusions to surface.

One historian suggests that “eligible” ages when slaves married, remarried, had

Figure 3⁹⁴

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF RETREAT SLAVES 1859



children and lived as family groups were the years between sixteen and forty for females and eighteen and fifty for males.⁹² Based on the numbers and percentages found in Figure 2, it appears that the age distribution among slave men and women at Retreat plantation was conducive for the formation of slave families. Thus, mate availability on this plantation in 1827 appeared supportive of slave families (as long as these slaves were not siblings and could "chose" their partners).

The age distribution for 1859 is indicative of a different pattern (Figure 3). The number of available men between the ages of ten and nineteen was significantly lower than women. Women in this age group (10-19) consisted of 17% of the total slave population while men represented only 6%. Thus, by 1859, young women may have had trouble finding a mate because they outnumbered men nearly 3 to 1. In addition, single men in their thirties outnumbered women 1.4 to 1. Consequently, these conclusions overlook the fact that "even when demographic conditions theoretically could provide a high incidence of monogamy and nuclear families among the slaves of a particular holding, black men and women sometimes made other choices based on a complex combination of reasons."⁹³ Many of these reasons are unknown to contemporary scholars.

In order to make sense of slave family life on Retreat plantation, the 1860 Estate Inventory for Mrs. King provides additional information. Of the 142 slaves at the time of her death, Mrs. King listed seventeen nuclear families that included 68% of the slave population.⁹⁵ Such high percentages indicate that the majority of Retreat slaves lived on a plantation with relatives present. Clearly, Retreat slaves had different familial experiences than those residing on Hampton Point, Kelvin Grove, and other Glynn County plantations. More importantly, slaves at Retreat also differed from Wilkes County slaves in that they lived on a much larger plantation where they maintained a family for more than three decades. Hence, region, demographic characteristics, and the attitude of the master on this plantation led to the development of cohesive slave families.

Reflecting on her experience during slavery, Emma Hurly stated that "Some of my old friends tells me they had good homes an' wuz teek keer of an' all that, but from my own 'sperience, I'se glad my chilun never knowed slavery."⁹⁶ Comments such as these confirm the diversity of slave experiences. Therefore, one must consider a particular slave's region of residence, demographic characteristics, labor patterns, as well as the attitude of the master, when differentiating

one slave experience from another. More specifically, in order to comprehend the complex nature of slave families, it is important to analyze the impact of labor on family formation. Community studies provide a critical methodology

and encourage historians to pay close attention to individual experiences. After all, Adeline and Psych grew up in vastly different family settings, despite the fact that they both lived on antebellum Georgia cotton plantations.



*Cotton pickers in 1875.
During slavery and
after African American
women worked alongside
men in the cotton fields.*

Atlanta History Center

Appendix A:

Table I

FEMALE AGE DISTRIBUTION
AT RETREAT, 1827⁹⁷

Age (Years)	N= Total Number	Percent (%)
0-9	23	16
10-19	9	6
20-29	10	7
30-39	7	5
40-49	11	8
50-59	4	3
60-69	0	0
70-79	2	1

Total Slave Population=140

DAINA L. RAMEY is an assistant professor of history at Michigan State University. She received her doctorate in history from the University of California, Los Angeles in 1998 and is currently finishing a manuscript on female slavery in Antebellum Georgia.

Table II

MALE AGE DISTRIBUTION
AT RETREAT, 1827⁹⁸

Age (Years)	N= Total Number	Percent (%)
0-9	25	18
10-19	15	11
20-29	7	5
30-39	9	6
40-49	9	6
50-59	7	5
60-69	2	1
70-79	0	0

Total Slave Population=140

Appendix B:

Table III

FEMALE AGE DISTRIBUTION
AT RETREAT, 1859⁹⁹

Age (Years)	N= Total Number	Percent (%)
0-9	22	17
10-19	22	17
20-29	10	8
30-39	8	6
40-49	7	5
50-59	1	1
60-69	1	1
70-79	0	0

Total Slave Population=129

Table IV

MALE AGE DISTRIBUTION
AT RETREAT, 1859¹⁰⁰

Age (Years)	N= Total Number	Percent (%)
0-9	19	15
10-19	8	6
20-29	10	8
30-39	11	9
40-49	6	5
50-59	2	2
60-69	1	1
70-79	1	1

Total Slave Population=129

NOTES

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¹George Rawick, ed., *The American Slave A Composite Autobiography* Vol. 13, pt. 4 (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Publishing, 1972), 161-167.

²*Ibid.*

³Frances Anne Kemble, *Journal of a Residence on a Georgia Plantation in 1838-1830* (1863; Reprint. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984), 301.

⁴Otis Ashmore, "Wilkes County, Its Place in Georgia History," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 1 (1917): 59-69; Eliza Bowen, *The Story of Wilkes County, Georgia* (Marietta, GA: Continental Book Company, 1950); Alex M. Hitz, "The Earliest Settlements in Wilkes County," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 40 (1956): 260-280; Workers Project Administration, *The Story of Washington-Wilkes*

(Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1941). The six counties created from Wilkes included: Elbert (1790), Oglethorpe (1793), Warren (1793), Lincoln (1796), Madison (1811), and Taliaferro (1825).

⁵"Many farmers possessed a single family of Negroes," explains James Bonner, "and a few had acquired from twenty to fifty, denoting the rise of a class of upcountry plantation masters." James C. Bonner, *A History of Georgia Agriculture, 1732-1860* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1964), 50; Julia Floyd Smith, *Slavery and Rice Cultivation in Low Country Georgia 1750-1860* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985), 9.

⁶The specific numbers for these years are 8.4 and 16.17 slaves per plantation. For additional antebellum years, Flanders estimated that the average size slaveholding was 10.8 for 1830, 11.7 for 1840, 13.0 for 1850. See Flanders, *Plantation Slavery in Georgia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1933), 70. The statistics for 1830 are confirmed by George Bolton Ellenberg, "Wilkes County, Georgia, Beginnings to 1830: The Growth of Slavery and its Impact on Class Structure," (Master's thesis, Clemson University, 1988), 120.

⁷U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Federal Manuscript Census, (Population and Slave Schedules) Wilkes County, Georgia, 1820-1860.

⁸Bonner, *A History of Georgia Agriculture*, 86-90; Flanders, *Plantation Slavery in Georgia*, 65, 70, 72, 76, and 81-83; Lewis Cecil Gray, *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1880 II* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1958), 686; and J. William Harris, *Plain Folk and Gentry in a Slave Society: White Liberty and Black Slavery in Augusta's Hinterlands* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1985), 40-52 and *passim*; and Joseph Menn, "The Large Slaveholders of the South, 1860," (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas, 1964), 30.

⁹Scholars at the Harvard University Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research calculated the total number of male and female slaves in the population based on federal census statistics. Authors calculations: For 1820 the total slave population for Wilkes County consisted of 9,705 slaves; female slaves included 4,809 (49.55%) and male slaves included 4,896 (50.44%). For 1850 the total slave population decreased in size to 8,281; female slaves totaled 4,216 (50.91%) and male slaves totaled 4,065 (49.26%). Again, in 1860, the slave population decreased to 7,953 slaves; females included 4,052 (50.94%) and males included 3,901 (49.05%).

¹⁰St. Simons Island is located 18 miles east of Brunswick, Georgia and is approximately 13 miles long and two miles wide. Jekyll Island rests south of St. Simons and is approximately 10 miles long consisting of 11,000 acres. Kenneth K. Krakow, *Georgia Place Names* (Macon: Winship Press, 1975), 120, 199, and 200.

¹¹Flanders, *Plantation Slavery in Georgia*, 57-59 and Smith, *Slavery and Rice Cultivation*, 15-22.

¹²Those who migrated to Glynn County came from South Carolina and Virginia in order to capitalize on Georgia's lenient land policy and alluvial soil. See, for examples Harris, *Plain Folk and Gentry*, 11-14; Guion G. Johnson, *A Social History of the Sea Islands: With Special Reference to St. Helena Island, South Carolina* (1930; Reprint. New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 22-27; John Solomon Otto, *Cannon's Point Plantation: Living Conditions and Status Patterns in the Old South* (New York: Academic Press, 1984), 21; U.B. Phillips, *American Negro Slavery* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1918), 86-97; and Smith *Slavery and Rice Cultivation*, 23-29. U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Federal Manuscript Census, (Population and Slave Schedules) Glynn County, Georgia, 1820-1860. John Solomon Otto, "Slavery in a Coastal Community-Glynn County (1790-1860)," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 63 (1979): 461-468. Otto found that Glynn County blacks occupied over 80% of the population during most of the antebellum period with the exception of 1860 (73%).

¹³Smith, *Slavery and Rice Cultivation*, 7 and 11.

¹⁴The exact figure was 41.67 slave per holding. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Federal Manuscript Census, (Slave Schedules) Glynn County, Georgia 1850. Author calculated this figure by dividing the total number of slaves (4209,) by the total number of slaveholders (101) for this particular year.

¹⁵U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Federal Manuscript Census, (Population and Slave Schedules) Glynn and Wilkes County, Georgia 1820-1860. Wilkes County slaves averaged 8,280 in number while Glynn County slaves averaged 3,641 throughout the antebellum period.

¹⁶The growing interest in slave families emerged within the literature of several general works on slavery. Some of the first scholars interested in the topic included W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Negro American Family* (Atlanta study no. 13. Atlanta: Atlanta University Publications, 1908); Stanley Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institution and Intellectual Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959); E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Family in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939); and Kenneth Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Antebellum South* (New York: Random House, 1956).

¹⁷Charles Joyner, *Down By the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community* (Urbana: University of Chicago Press, 1984), xvi.

¹⁸Blassingame, *The Slave Community*; Orville Vernon Burton, "In My Father's House are Many Mansions: Family and Community in Edgefield, South Carolina" (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985).

¹⁹Harris, *Plain Folk and Gentry*, 13.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 24.

²¹Gray, *History of Agriculture II*, 702. "About the middle or latter part of July" explains Gray, "the crop was 'laid by,' and there was an interval of rest until the product began to ripen sufficiently to justify picking."

- ²²Scholars contend that Sea Island cotton was first planted on St. Simons Island in 1786 and 1787 by Alexander Bissett and his friend Thomas Spalding of Sapelo Island. Bonner, *A History of Georgia Agriculture*, 51-58; Gray, *History of Agriculture*, 673-678 and 731-732; Otto, *Cannon's Point Plantation*, 23; Phillips, 150-163; and Whitmarsh B. Seabrook, *Memoir on the Origin, Cultivation and Uses of Cotton: From the Earliest Ages to the Present Time With Special Reference to the Sea-Island Cotton Plant* (Charleston: Miller & Browne, 1844), 18.
- ²³Bonner, *History of Georgia Agriculture*, 52 and Seabrook, *A Memoir on the Origin, Cultivation and Uses of Cotton*, 14. Sea Island cotton is often referred to as the black seed variety while short-staple cotton contained green seeds.
- ²⁴Bonner, *History of Georgia Agriculture*, 53; Seabrook, *A Memoir on the Origin, Cultivation and Uses of Cotton*, 35-36.
- ²⁵Otto, *Cannon's Point Plantation*, 23. The two cottons had different uses, and those employed in the Sea Island industry focused their energy on the quality of the fiber rather than the quantity.
- ²⁶*Ibid.*, 680.
- ²⁷Ira Berlin and Philip D. Morgan, "Labor and the Shaping of Slave Life in the Americas," in *Cultivation and Culture*, Berlin and Morgan, eds., (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993), 18 and Otto, *Cannon's Point Plantation*, 25, and 34-35.
- ²⁸Smith, *Slavery and Rice in Lowcountry Georgia*, 45. Smith contends that rice and Sea Island cotton plantations operated under the task system. For information regarding the number of hoeings, see Seabrook, *A Memoir on the Origin, Cultivation and Uses of Cotton*, 23; Gray, *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States II*, 734; and Otto, *Cannon's Point Plantation*, 25 and 35.
- ²⁹Otto, *Cannon's Point Plantation*, 35. Seabrook, *A Memoir on the Origin, Cultivation and Uses of Cotton*, 735. Seabrook, said that slaves averaged twenty-five pounds per day. Johnson, *A Social History of the Sea Islands*, 83. Johnson also confirmed that a "full hand" picked from ninety to one hundred pounds of cotton per day.
- ³⁰Gray, *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States II*, 689.
- ³¹J.D. Leagare, "Account of an Agricultural Excursion Made into the South of Georgia in the Winter of 1832," *Southern Agriculturist* (April 1833), 160-169; Otto, *Cannon's Point Plantation*, 35; and Seabrook, *A Memoir on the Origin, Cultivation and Uses of Cotton*, 735-737.
- ³²Gray, *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States II*, 704. Gray explained that "much less care was devoted to the preparation of upland cotton for the market than was the case for Sea Island cotton.
- ³³Wilma King, *Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 63. King noted that the number of slave marriages increased during this "lay-by season."
- ³⁴Rawick, *The American Slave* vol. 12, pt. 1 172-176.
- ³⁵*Ibid.*, 160-167.
- ³⁶Larry Hudson, *To Have and To Hold: Slave Work and Family Life in Antebellum South Carolina* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997), 52-55. Hudson discovered that "Race Week" on South Carolina plantations emphasized family pride.
- ³⁷Rawick, *The American Slave* vol. 12, pt. 1 97-102.
- ³⁸*Ibid.*, 274-280.
- ³⁹This visitation pattern was fairly common throughout the South as slaves in Louisiana, South Carolina, and Virginia, testified to similar options. Slaveholders rarely allowed female slaves visitation passes perhaps due to nineteenth-century gender conventions and women's responsibilities as mothers.
- ⁴⁰Rawick, *The American Slave*, vol. 13, 161-167.
- ⁴¹*Ibid.*, vol. 12, 160.
- ⁴²*Ibid.*, vol. 13, 217.
- ⁴³Colonial Records of the State of Georgia, 19 vols., vol. 18, 102; Kenneth Coleman, *A History of Georgia* (2nd ed., Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1977), 182; and Flanders, *Plantation Slavery in Georgia*, 23-39 and 233-253.
- ⁴⁴Rawick, *The American Slave*, vol. 13, 33-36.
- ⁴⁵King, *Stolen Childhood*, 18, see also, 69-90, and *passim*. King explains that although slave parents spent the majority of their time laboring, "many never stopped trying to foster positive relationships" with their children.
- ⁴⁶Stevenson, *Life in Black and White*, 213-215.
- ⁴⁷Rawick, *The American Slave*, vol. 12, 337-342.
- ⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 201-211.
- ⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 274-280.
- ⁵⁰*The Washington News* [New Series- No. 40] Washington, Georgia, 27 March 1828.
- ⁵¹*The News*, Washington, Georgia (1822-1825) and *The News and Planter's Gazette*, Washington, Georgia (1840-1844).
- ⁵²"Fan" is advertised in *The News*, Washington Georgia (29 October 1840), while "Matilda" and "Rachel" are announced in *The Washington News*, Washington, Georgia (22 January 1822).
- ⁵³This pattern existed because slave women were the legal parents of their offspring while the status of slave "father" often went unrecognized.
- ⁵⁴Stevenson, *Life in Black and White*, 209-211 and 213-215.
- ⁵⁵"Will of Alexander Pope Sr.," 25 June 1863, Wilkes County Court of Ordinary Book HH, 1837-1877 (Atlanta: Georgia Department of Archives and History).
- ⁵⁶"Will of John H. Pope," 4 November 1859, Wilkes County Court of Ordinary Book HH, 1837-1877 (Atlanta: Georgia Department of Archives and History).
- ⁵⁷Charles Spalding Wyly, *Annals and Statistics of Glynn County, Georgia* (Brunswick, GA: Press of H. A. Wrench & Sons, 1897), 64. Hampton Point plantation, located in Glynn County, was one of

Major Butler's two estates. The other estate—Butler's Island—located in McIntosh county, concentrated on rice cultivation rather than Sea Island cotton. Butler resided at Hampton Point from 1795-1815 and passed the property on to four generations of offspring. For reference to slaves on the Butler plantations see Frances Kemble, *Journal of a Residence on a Georgia Plantation in 1838-1839* (1863; Reprint. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984).

⁵⁸Wylly, *Annals and Statistics*, 64. In his later study, Wylly found that "no one came to visit him [Butler] but...[those who did were] met on the landing by a vidette, who enquired your business and escorted you to the mansion." Wylly, *The Seed that was Sown*, 137.

⁵⁹Otto, *Cannon's Point Plantation*, 48; Margaret Davis Cate, "Plantations of St. Simons Island," typescript in *Margaret Davis Cate Collection*, Georgia Historical Society; and "Kelvin Grove Plantation Book," *Margaret Davis Cate Collection* on microfilm (Athens: University of Georgia).

⁶⁰Frances Kemble, *Journal of a Residence*, *passim*.

⁶¹Kemble, *Journal of a Residence*, 245-246.

⁶²Stevenson, "Slavery," in Darlene Clark Hine et al., eds., *Black Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993): 1053 and, *Life in Black and White*, 245-249; and Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1985), 91-118. Stevenson found that "procreation literally became part of their job documented by the numerous advertisements describing slave women as 'breeding wenches.'"

⁶³Donna Wyant Howell, ed., *I was a Slave: True Life Stories told by Former American Slaves in the 1930's* (Washington D.C.: American Legacy Books, 1996), 15. John Campbell, "Work, Pregnancy, and Infant Mortality Among Southern Slaves," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 14, no. 2 (Spring 1984): 783-810; Cheryll Ann Cody, "Cycles of Work and Childbearing: Seasonality in Women's Lives on Low Country Plantations," in *More than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas* David Barry Gaspar and Darlene Clark Hine eds., (Urbana: Indiana University Press, 1996): 61-78.

⁶⁴W. W. Hazzard, "On the General Management of a Plantation," *Southern Agriculturist* (5 April 1831), 353, emphasis added. Glynn County masters offered more extensive rewards than owners in Wilkes County where large slave families received a two-room cabin instead of the standard one-room holding.

⁶⁵Stevenson, *Life in Black and White*, xi-xiii and *passim*.

⁶⁶Kemble, *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation*, 270.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 222-223.

⁶⁸Barbara Bush, "Hard Labor: Women, Childbirth, and Resistance in British Caribbean Slave Societies," in *More Than Chattel*, 193-217; Campbell, "Work, Pregnancy, and Infant

Mortality," 793-812; Cody, "Cycles of Work and of Childbearing," in *More Than Chattel*, 218-238; Dusiinberre, *Them Dark Days*, 235-247, Appendix C, Appendix D, and *passim*; Michael P. Johnson, "Smothered Infants: Were Slave Mothers at Fault?" *Journal of Southern History* 47, no. 4 (November 1981): 493-520; Kenneth F. and Virginia H. Kipple, "Slave Child Mortality: Some Nutritional Answers to a Perennial Puzzle," *Journal of Family History* 10, no. 3 (March 1977): 284-309; Herbert S. Klein and Stanley L. Engerman, "Fertility Differentials Between Slaves in the United States and the British West Indies: A Note on Lactation Practices and Their Possible Implications," *William & Mary Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (1978): 357-374.

⁶⁹Campbell, "Work, Pregnancy, and Infant Mortality," 805.

⁷⁰Campbell, "Work, Pregnancy, and Infant Mortality"; Klein and Engerman, "Fertility Differentials"; and Steckel, "A Peculiar Population."

⁷¹Kipple and Kipple, "Slave Child Mortality," 299.

⁷²Steckel, "A Dreadful Childhood," 438. Steckel explains that the high probability of death rates among slaves is directly related to work routines.

⁷³Wilkes County slave narratives contained few references to relief from labor compared to the testimonies in the Kemble journal. Additionally, the piedmont climate did not pose a threat for infectious diseases such as yellow fever and malaria as did the tidewater region of Glynn County. Further, Wilkes County masters, because they resided in a more 'healthy' environment, were rarely absent from their plantations. Harris, *Plain Folk and Gentry*; Johnson, *A Social History of the Sea Islands*, 46-73; and Peter Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 Through the Stono Rebellion* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1974), 63-91.

⁷⁴Female slaves represented 45 of the 81 slaves on the plantation. See "List of Field Hands at Kelvin Grove: January 1853," in Kelvin Grove Plantation Book, *Margaret Davis Cate Collection* (Athens: University of Georgia).

⁷⁵Along with Ally, Jinny, Nancy, Hanna, and Molly, Hamit gave birth to twins on 15 August 1853. "Kelvin Grove Plantation Book."

⁷⁶Hamit's twins died a month later on 20 September 1853. Molly's child, born on 14 October 1853, died nearly two weeks later on 27 October 1853. These records contain information for the year 1853, and sketches of information for the year 1858, but the latter date provides no information regarding the births and deaths of slave infants. It cannot be ascertained whether or not Ally, Jinny, Nancy, and Hanna's children survived after 1853.

⁷⁷"Kelvin Grove Plantation Book"; Kemble, *Journal of a Residence on a Georgia Plantation*, 72-77, 95-99, 128-129, 156, 222-231, 274, 287, 293-294, 303, and *passim*. Slaves on the Butler estates where Frances Kemble lived during 1838 and

1839 also complained that their master did not give them enough recovery-time after childbirth.

⁷⁸Table 1 was created from information contained in the "Kelvin Grove Plantation Book."

⁷⁹Steckel, "A Dreadful Childhood," 452. Steckel argues that highly productive female slave field hands "created substantial stress on reproduction" because "the high value of their time encouraged early supplementation of their infants."

⁸⁰Klein and Engerman, "Fertility Differentials."

⁸¹Kemble, *Journal of a Residence*, 156.

⁸²Steckel, "A Dreadful Childhood," 432.

⁸³Kemble, *Journal of a Residence*, 156.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 245.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, iv, 245, 156, and *passim*.

⁸⁶Stevenson, "Black Family Structure in Colonial and Antebellum Virginia: Amending the Revisionist Perspective," in M. Belinda Tucker and Claudia Mitchell-Kernan, eds., *The Decline in Marriage Among African Americans* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1995), 27-56. Stevenson found that in addition to the variety in structure, "the slave family was not a static imitative institution."

⁸⁷Anna Matilda Page and Thomas Butler King had ten children whom were all raised at Retreat. Margaret Davis Cate, "Retreat Plantation Notes," typescript in *Margaret Davis Cate Collection*, Georgia Historical Society; Cate, *Our Today's and Yesterdays: A Story of Brunswick and the Coastal Islands* (Brunswick: Clover Brothers, Inc., rev. ed., 1930), 127; "Will of William Page," 6 February 1827, *Margaret Davis Cate Collection*, Georgia Historical Society; and "Will of Anna Matilda Page King," 7 March 1859, Court of Ordinary, Glynn County Ordinary Estate Records, Inventories and Appraisals, Book E (Atlanta: Georgia Department of Archives and History). Retreat plantation marked the home of the Page and King descendants. William Page and his wife Hannah Timmons migrated to St. Simons in the late 1790s leaving their plantations Page's Point and Ottasee in Prince William Parish, South Carolina for similar reasons as the Caters (Kelvin Grove plantation). Prior to their arrival, the Pages experienced the hardship of twelve miscarriages, thus when Hannah Timmons Page gave birth to Anna Matilda on St. Simons Island, the couple believed that there was something mystical about the island and decided to make it their permanent home.

⁸⁸"Will of William Page," 6 February 1827, *Margaret Davis Cate Collection*, Georgia Historical Society; "Inventory of the Personal Property & Estate of William Page, 1827," Glynn County Ordinary Estate Records, Inventories and Appraisals, Book D (Atlanta: Georgia Department of Archives and History); U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Federal Manuscript Census, (Slave Schedules) Glynn County, Georgia, 1850-1860; Anna Matilda Page King Will, 7 March 1859, Court of Ordinary, Glynn County Ordinary Estate Records, Inventories and Appraisals, Book E (Atlanta: Georgia Department of Archives and History); and "Inventory of the Estate of Mrs. Anna Matilda King, 1860," William Audley Couper Papers, *Southern Historical Collection*, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

⁸⁹The total slave population in 1827 was 140 slaves. Of this population 66 were female and 74 were male.

⁹⁰Daina L. Ramey, "A Place of Our Own: Labor, Family, and Community Among Female Slaves in Piedmont and Tidewater Georgia, 1820-1860" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, 1998).

⁹¹For raw data, see Tables I & II in Appendix A.

⁹²Hudson, *To Have and To Hold*, 141 and note 3, 209.

⁹³Stevenson, *Life in Black and White*, 234.

⁹⁴For raw data, see Tables III & IV in Appendix B.

⁹⁵Of the 142 slaves in the population, 97 of them belonged to family units. See Ramey, "A Place of Our Own," appendixes.

⁹⁶Rawick, *The American Slave* (emphasis added).

⁹⁷Figures calculated by author, based on "Will of William Page," 6 February 1827, *Margaret Davis Cate Collection*, Georgia Historical Society; "Inventory of the Personal Property & Estate of William Page, 1827," Glynn County Ordinary Estate Records, Inventories and Appraisals, Book D (Atlanta: Georgia Department of Archives and History).

⁹⁸*Ibid.*

⁹⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*